

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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**Chairman Kildee Statement At Committee Hearing On Impact Of
No Child Left Behind On Students With Disabilities**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, for a subcommittee hearing on “How No Child Left Behind Affects Students with Disabilities.”*

I'm pleased to welcome my fellow subcommittee members, the public, and our witnesses, to this hearing on “How the No Child Left Behind Act Affects Children with Disabilities.”

Providing for the education of children with disabilities has been a top priority for me for many years.

During my 12 years in the Michigan Legislature, I authored the state's special education law - even before Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act – today we call it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA – was a watershed for children with disabilities and their families.

Before IDEA, more than a million children with disabilities were excluded entirely from our education system and most of those who were not excluded had only limited access.

IDEA's supporters – and it passed the House by 404 to 7 – recognized that that situation was unconscionable, and resolved that children with disabilities, like all children, deserved the dignity of an education.

Of course, today's hearing is about the No Child Left Behind Act, not IDEA.

But, the same principle – dignity – underlies the inclusion of children with disabilities in No Child Left Behind. Children with disabilities must overcome unique hurdles to get their education.

But, No Child Left Behind recognizes that in the vast majority of cases, that doesn't mean that these children can't achieve what their non-disabled peers achieve – only that they need special help to achieve it.

Our witnesses today will give specific examples of how they have provided that help and what it has meant for children with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the president's proposal to cut special education funding by \$300 million is not the kind of extra help these children need.

Nor is his continued underfunding of No Child Left Behind.

As we will hear from our witnesses, to improve special education programs, we must strengthen general education programs, because that is where so many special education students are and where they belong.

For the same reason, we will hear about the need to prepare all teachers to work with all students – not just general education or special education students.

And, we will hear many suggestions about how to improve No Child Left Behind to ensure that it accounts for the complexities that states, school districts, and schools must address in educating and assessing students with disabilities.

I hope that today's hearing will help us understand these issues, which are some of the most difficult and important ones in the law.

And, I look forward to working together with my Ranking Member, Mr. Castle, Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon, and with all the members of the committee, on a bipartisan reauthorization of No Child Left Behind this year.

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